Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. - 20. (Canceled)

21. (Currently Amended) A ceramics honeycomb structure formed of a plurality of cells forming a fluid flow passage partitioned by porous partition walls, and comprising an inflow end part allowing fluid to flow therein, an outflow end part allowing fluid to flow therefrom, and an outer peripheral part including an outer peripheral surface, wherein the honeycomb structure has ~~characterized by having a structure where~~ a porosity per unit volume (cm^3) that gradually increases from the inflow end part side to the outflow end part side at a rate of 0.2%/mm or less, the honeycomb structure further having a reinforcing agent impregnated therein, the reinforcing agent comprising at least one element selected from the group consisting of Si, Ti, Mg and Al.

22. (Previously Presented) A ceramics honeycomb structure according to claim 21 which has a structure where the porosity per unit volume (cm^3) gradually increases from the inflow end part side to the outflow end part side at a rate of 0.1%/mm or less.

23. (Currently Amended) A ceramics honeycomb structure formed of a plurality of cells forming a fluid flow passage partitioned by porous partition walls, and comprising an inflow end part allowing fluid to flow therein, an outflow end part allowing fluid to flow therefrom and an outer peripheral part including an outer peripheral surface, wherein the honeycomb structure has ~~characterized by having a structure where~~ a porosity per unit volume (cm^3) that gradually decreases from the central part of a section perpendicular to the flow passage direction of the cells to the outer peripheral part at a rate of 0.2%/mm or less, the honeycomb structure further having a reinforcing agent impregnated therein, the reinforcing

agent comprising at least one element selected from the group consisting of Si, Ti, Mg and Al.

24. (Previously Presented) A ceramics honeycomb structure according to claim 23 which has a structure where the porosity per unit volume (cm^3) gradually decreases from the central part of a section perpendicular to the flow passage of the cells to the outer peripheral part at a rate of 0.1%/mm or less.

25. (Previously Presented) A ceramics honeycomb structure according to claim 21, wherein a porosity per unit volume (cm^3) in the area of up to 150 mm from the flow passage end face of the inflow end part side in the inward direction of the flow passage is 10-50%.

26. (Previously Presented) A ceramics honeycomb structure according to claim 22, wherein a porosity per unit volume (cm^3) in the area of up to 150 mm from the flow passage end face of the inflow end part side in the inward direction of the flow passage is 10-50%.

27. (Previously Presented) A ceramics honeycomb structure according to claim 23, wherein a porosity per unit volume (cm^3) in the area of up to 150 mm from the flow passage end face of the inflow end part side in the inward direction of the flow passage is 10-50%.

28. (Previously Presented) A ceramics honeycomb structure according to claim 24, wherein a porosity per unit volume (cm^3) in the area of up to 150 mm from the flow passage end face of the inflow end part side in the inward direction of the flow passage is 10-50%.

29. (Previously Presented) A ceramics honeycomb structure according to claim 21, wherein the minimum thickness of the partition walls is 0.030-0.076 mm.

30. (Previously Presented) A ceramics honeycomb structure according to claim 23, wherein the minimum thickness of the partition walls is 0.030-0.076 mm.

31. (Previously Presented) A ceramics honeycomb structure according to claim 21 which comprises at least one ceramics selected from the group consisting of cordierite, alumina, mullite, silicon nitride, aluminum titanate, zirconia and silicon carbide.

32. (Previously Presented) A ceramics honeycomb structure according to claim 23 which comprises at least one ceramics selected from the group consisting of cordierite, alumina, mullite, silicon nitride, aluminum titanate, zirconia and silicon carbide.

33. (Previously Presented) A ceramics honeycomb structure according to claim 21, wherein the section perpendicular to the flow passage has a shape of circle, ellipse, oval, trapezoid, triangle, tetragon, hexagon or left and right asymmetric irregular shape.

34. (Previously Presented) A ceramics honeycomb structure according to claim 23, wherein the section perpendicular to the flow passage has a shape of circle, ellipse, oval, trapezoid, triangle, tetragon, hexagon or left and right asymmetric irregular shape.

35. (Previously Presented) A ceramics honeycomb structure according to claim 21, wherein the section of the cells perpendicular to the flow passage has a shape of triangle, tetragon or hexagon.

36. (Previously Presented) A ceramics honeycomb structure according to claim 23, wherein the section of the cells perpendicular to the flow passage has a shape of triangle, tetragon or hexagon.

37. (Previously Presented) A ceramics honeycomb structure according to claim 21 which is used as automobile exhaust gas purification catalyst carriers.

38. (Previously Presented) A ceramics honeycomb structure according to claim 23 which is used as automobile exhaust gas purification catalyst carriers.

39. (Previously Presented) A ceramics honeycomb structure according to claim 21 which has a catalyst component supported on the partition walls and is incorporated into a catalyst converter by being held at the outer peripheral surface of the outer wall.

40. (Previously Presented) A ceramics honeycomb structure according to claim 23 which has a catalyst component supported on the partition walls and is incorporated into a catalyst converter by being held at the outer peripheral surface of the outer wall.

41. - 56. (Canceled)